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# Westfield latest Hamilton County city to consider second-class status

May 19, 2022 | [Daniel Bradley](#)

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*In 2018, Westfield had a totem sign installed along U.S. 31 near 146th Street that says "Westfield" on both the north and south sides of the sign.*

The Westfield City Council plans to discuss a proposed ordinance at its meeting Monday night to change the city from third-class to second-class status—a move that would expand the council from seven to nine members and make other governing changes.

Mayor Andy Cook told IBJ the ordinance will be introduced Monday, followed by a public hearing scheduled for the council's June 13 meeting and a vote expected when the council reconvenes June 27.

If approved, voters in 2023 would elect a city clerk and two additional city council members—one at-large and another

representing a sixth district. The move to second-class status would take effect Jan. 1, 2024.

The city's clerk-treasurer position would be eliminated, and a newly established city controller would be recommended by the council and appointed by the mayor.

"Everything's kind of coming to a head where the timing is right for us to be considering this move," City Councilor Scott Willis said.

Westfield is eligible to move from third- to second-class city status because it has crossed the population threshold of 35,000 that Indiana communities must have to be considered for second-class status.

Westfield's population increased from about 30,000 in the 2010 census to more than 47,000 in the 2020 census. The city's growth during that time coincided with increased development, including construction of the Grand Park Sports Campus, which opened in 2014.

"We're not a city of 20,000 people anymore," Cook said. "We're over 47,000 people now, and we need to extend our elected official quantity to serve that number of people."

Cook said findings from an analysis last year by Indianapolis-based consultant Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors LLC recommended Westfield move to second-class city status.

Willis said he supports Cook's push to make Westfield a second-class city for two reasons.

One, he said, is that having a controller on the city staff to

manage Westfield's finances makes sense given the city's budget.

"It really aligns the city with what you would expect to see in a corporation," Willis said. "And when you look at our budget, in our TIF districts, we're over \$100 million in budget. That's a lot of money not to have a controller as a part of your staff that's kind of guiding the city in its finances. So, to me, that's a logical next step."

Willis said adding two members to the city council is the second reason he agrees with reclassification.

"We're stretched a lot more thin than we would be if we added two more," he said. "I think when it comes to government, the more voices the better. You want people represented in their community, and by adding two seats, that allows us to do that exact thing."

Indianapolis is the state's only first-class city, which requires a population of 500,000 or more. More than two dozen cities in the state have second-class status, including three other Hamilton County cities that [made the move in recent years](#) due to population growth.

Fishers changed from a town to a second-class city on Jan. 1, 2015, after voters elected the city's first mayor and nine-member city council in the 2014 election.

The Noblesville City Council voted in 2013 to upgrade to a second-class city, and residents elected the city's first nine-member council and clerk in 2015. It officially took on second-class status on Jan. 1, 2016.

The Carmel City Council in 2016 [voted to elevate the city](#) to second-class status after previous councils twice rebuffed Mayor Jim Brainard's proposals to upgrade the community. Voters elected a city clerk and two additional council members in 2019.

Willis said he is not sure if the Westfield City Council will pass the ordinance, and he thinks the vote will be "razor thin." He added he thinks the public should have a voice in the matter, and that it is the right move to explore an upgrade.

"I'm still open-minded to change my mind," he said. "Maybe through public dialogue and the process as it plays out, maybe I change my mind, but I've been pretty supportive of a Class 2 city for a while."

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